

ADDICTION - THE EVIDENCE

- 1 The term 'addiction', used by some to describe the smoking habit, has so many different meanings that it no longer has scientific status.
- 2 The reasons why people smoke are many and varied.
 - Some claim that nicotine is addictive and that the processes that determine it are similar to those for drugs such as heroin and cocaine.
 - Others claim that smokers use tobacco as a 'tool' or resource that provide psychological benefits such as increased mental alertness, anxiety reduction and coping with stress.
- 3 Some smoke on a regular basis throughout the day and may develop strong habitual behaviours as to when and where to smoke. Others go through extended periods of abstinence. This runs counter to the notion that 'addiction' is about being unable to resist uncontrollable cravings.
 - Nearly half of all living adults who have ever smoked have quit.
- 4 Although US Health Officials formerly accepted that the role of nicotine in tobacco was comparable with the role of caffeine in coffee, they introduced additional criteria in defining addictiveness whereby nicotine was reclassified as addictive rather than habituating. They subsequently dropped certain of these criteria used as points of distinction between habituation and addiction.
- 5 The data offered as evidence in support of the claim that nicotine is addicting, do not stand critical scientific scrutiny.
 - The reported research findings on the role of nicotine in smoking behaviour are unclear.

2501140174

- 6 The data used to support the contention that nicotine has psychoactive effects have been presented in a misleading fashion to give an impression that nicotine is similar to heroin and cocaine, when it is not.**
- The data have been vastly over-interpreted.
 - Under conditions similar to smoking, smokers could not tell between nicotine and the placebo. The amount of nicotine required to produce psychoactive effects far exceed those typically achieved in smoking.
 - Laboratory studies which directly compared nicotine and cocaine by self administration, generally found nicotine to be much weaker are re-enforcing stimulus.
 - Tobacco is used for pleasure and relaxation, in contrast to hard drugs which are used to get intoxicated and escape from reality.
- 7 Because a substance is 'psychoactive' is insufficient grounds to establish whether or not it is 'addictive'.**
- Studies have shown the mental and euphoric disturbances produced by substances like heroin and cocaine differ markedly from the subtle 'psychoactive' effects of nicotine.
 - The adequacy and interpretation of the studies in relation to comparison of nicotine with heroin and cocaine substances is questioned.
- 8 It has been argued that smokers achieve some benefits from smoking, enjoying these benefits which are totally compatible with everyday tasks and stresses, and chose to continue to enjoy these benefits.**
- Decisions to quit, reduce or continue smoking reflect a rational and reasoned choice that smokers make and periodically renew.
- 9 The resource hypothesis passes the common sense test that the addiction hypothesis fails.**
- That is, people smoke primarily for purposes of enjoyment, performance and anxiety reduction, or both.